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SERVICE

USDA'S REPORT TO CONSUMERS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE • OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS, WASHINGTON, D.C. 20250

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No. 110

BONE UP ON YOUR HAM KNOWLEDGE

Buy It Wisely and Keep It Safely.

Popular ham becomes even more popular as the calendar makes the turn toward Easter and Spring. There are so many different types of ham that choosing one to fit taste and budget isn't always easy. All hams, of course, start in the same place--the hind leg of a hog. From there, hams can be divided into two basic groups: Those that must be cooked before eating (fresh, cured, and cured-and-smoked) and those that can be eaten "as is" (canned and those labeled "fully cooked"). Once you decide to cook or not to cook, you can decide on the size. There are whole hams, butt half (the upper, meatier, rounded half), shank half (the lower, slightly pointed half), butt portion and shank portion (either the butt half or the shank half with the center cuts removed). From the time your ham purchase is in your grocery cart, it's up to you to keep it wholesome and safe to eat. Ham, like all meat, naturally contains certain bacteria. The one most often involved in ham-related illness is staphylococcus aureus or "staph" for short. Staph organisms themselves can't hurt you--in fact, they are in the air you breathe, on your clothing and skin. Under certain conditions, though, staph germs can multiply rapidly, producing a poisonous toxin which may cause nausea, abdominal cramps, and vomiting. Keeping ham safe to eat means storing it properly, cooking it thoroughly, and handling leftovers with care. Detailed information to help you buy, prepare, and store ham wisely and safely, is available by writing to SERVICE, Office of Communication, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250.

PLAN A HEAD

Or Your Bathroom May Be A Washout. The right kind of bath areas add greatly to the livability of a home--and the compatibility of a family. They should be practical and convenient--and pretty, too. All it takes is some careful planning. If you are considering remodeling your bath or building a new one, a USDA booklet, "Planning Bathrooms for Today's Homes" (G-99) can be of help. With text and illustrations, the booklet discusses bath arrangements, location, choice of fixtures and their care, storage and accessories, ventilation, lighting and heating, and wall and floor finishes. Copies of the booklet are for sale at 15 cents each from the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402.



THE BEES ARE STILL BUSY

But Not Keeping Up. Consumers are swarming to buy honey. The surge in popularity for this old-time favorite is related to the increased demand for "natural" foods generally. But as demand for honey has increased, production has not. The result is a sharp rise in honey prices. Last year, honey prices, at 31 cents per pound, were the highest they have been since 1947. On the production side, the bees are still at it, but there are fewer to satisfy our sweet tooth. In 1972 there were slightly more than 4 million bee colonies, compared with 4.7 million in 1965. Production amounted to 215 million pounds, compared with 242 million pounds in 1965. And the honey problem is not just local. Prices for honey on the world market climbed steeply throughout 1972 reflecting an expanded demand in other countries. The recent increased demand, however, won't necessarily result in a sudden increase in supply. There are a number of factors involved. Almost an all-controlling one is weather. Cool, and wet weather, for instance, means the nectar flow is restricted so the bees may come back with empty pockets. The use of pesticides has also affected U.S. production. And beekeepers say the lack of floral sources in the U.S. is making it difficult to locate new apiary sites. Only so many hives can be put in a location for efficient production.

MARCH PLENTIFUL FOODS

Protein Featured. Peanuts and peanut products, turkeys, and dry beans, all good protein buys, are on the Plentiful Foods List for March. In April peanuts and peanut products will again appear on the Plentiful List along with fresh oranges, frozen concentrated orange juice, chilled orange juice, canned orange juice, canned cranberry sauce and cranberry juice cocktail, and dry beans.

INFORMATION ABOUT FNS INFORMATION

New Catalog of Food Aid Publications. The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) is the agency that administers USDA food assistance programs. In the course of its work, the agency issues a variety of publications--periodicals, educational flyers, pamphlets, technical handbooks, leaflets. The materials are designed both for persons who might be eligible to take part in food programs and for those who can spread the word about food help. A catalog of FNS publications--122 of them--has recently been issued so cooperating State and local agencies, program participants, and community organizations can see just what is available. Covers of principal FNS publications are pictured, along with a description and purpose of the contents of each, to help in making appropriate selections. One section lists the publications that have been translated into Spanish. For a single free copy of "Publications of the Food and Nutrition Service" (FNS-11), write to the Information Division, Food and Nutrition Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250.

ATTENTION

We've Changed Some. Following recent reorganization activities, the name of USDA's Office of Information has been changed to the Office of Communication. The office of the Editor of SERVICE has been moved from 461-A to Room 535-A. The telephone number remains (202) 447-5437. So keep in touch.

SPRING FOOD PREVIEW

The best food investment you can make this spring? It's time, not just money. Spending a little more time on careful menu planning, comparison shopping, and hunting economical recipes will pay your family big dividends--in economy, good health, and livelier eating, too.

Food prices will be up some during spring, but by much less than in the winter quarter. You'll see a little more increase in beef and chicken, but the warming winds of spring will bring seasonally larger supplies of eggs (after Easter), dairy products, and fresh vegetables. Lettuce and tomato prices will be moderate, and egg prices should decline seasonally between Easter and the end of spring.

Milk prices have been a little higher than last winter, and ice cream and butter have remained about the same. Butter prices should drop following Agriculture Department dairy actions effective March 15. And salad and cooking oil, plus margarine, have dropped in price over the past year.

A host of carbohydrate foods are generally within a penny of their year-earlier levels. That includes bread (despite higher wheat prices), rice, canned spaghetti, instant mashed and frozen french fried potatoes, and even corn flakes (they cost less).

Best buys in fruit right now are canned and frozen citrus juices. There are plenty of fresh oranges and lemons on the counters, although a little less grapefruit. Bananas are still a fine buy, and applesauce, canned peaches, and fruit cocktail are the best buys among canned items.

Meanwhile, fruit growers are hoping for a bigger harvest this fall. Bad weather made last fall's harvest the smallest in a generation, and boosted apple, pear, and other fresh deciduous fruit prices. Small harvests also have zapped the produce section, especially for onions and potatoes. Potato prices will hold above a year earlier, at least until July.

Animal protein food prices are higher this spring than a year ago, largely a case of steady-to-smaller supplies in the face of stronger demand by consumers. High feed prices have forced poultry producers to turn out less broilers and eggs than last spring. But supplies of beef and pork are on the uptrend, which will likely have some price impact during the second half.

Here's the outlook this spring for "other" proteins - other than red meat and poultry:

Eggs: Up and down, you'll see eggs do both. As in past years, eggs will go a little higher until Eastertime, but then decline gradually for the remainder of spring.

Cheese: Spring prices will reflect recent wholesale cheese price increases, and will rise a bit further before the peak in milk supplies, in May and June, steadies prices.

Dry Beans: Prices are mixed this year--pinto, pea beans, and blackeyes have been more reasonable, while limas, kidney beans, and great Northerns have been higher.

Peanut butter: The price has changed little during the last year and a half. Little change is likely in spring.

Fish: Although higher this year, fish prices are moderating from the rapid increases of last year. Fish prices vary widely depending on the species and the fresh, canned, or frozen form. Canned sardines dropped in price during January.

WHAT YOU SEED IS WHAT YOU GET

If You Follow The Label. Got a new lawn to seed or a seedy looking lawn that needs another shot of seed? In either case, it will take time, effort, and money to establish and maintain a good looking and serviceable lawn. Your investment in all three will be wasted if you don't know how to select lawn seed. As a starter, it is well to decide what plans you have for your lawn --a recreation area, a decorative setting for your house, a place to sit and commune with nature? Then, will the lawn be in the sun or in the shade? The purpose and location of your lawn will determine the kind of lawn seed best suited for the job. Next, it is important to use the label on the seed package as a guide to the type and quality of the seed. A truth-in-labeling law, enforced by USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service, requires that the label for lawn seed show the kinds of seed in the package; the amounts of inert matter, weed seeds, and other-crop seeds; and the germination rate the seed had when it was tested. For more information on how to read labels to get the best buy --along with a list of commonly used kinds of lawn seed, the areas where they are most popular, and some of their characteristics--write to the Office of Communication, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250. Ask for "How To Buy Lawn Seed" (G-169).

YCC NUMBER THREE

Youth Work At Conservation. Starting in late June, about 3500 young men and women from 15 through 18 years-of-age and from all walks of life will take to the woods and hinterlands to work at conservation. For eight summer weeks they will be employees of USDA or the Department of the Interior as the Youth Conservation Corps (YCC). As in the previous two years of the program, YCC goals are to accomplish needed conservation work, to provide gainful employment for young citizens, and to develop their appreciation and understanding of the Nation's natural environment and heritage. There will be 102 residential and non-residential camps in operation, and corpsmen will each receive a sum of approximately \$300 for the season plus the value of food and lodging. Recruiting areas will be designated for each of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, American Samoa, the Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico. School districts and community youth organizations will do the actual recruiting and application processing. For more information on eligibility requirements, location of camps, and recruiting groups, young people should contact their local schools, the nearest USDA or Department of the Interior office (listed in the telephone directory), and watch local news outlets. Application should be made before May.

SERVICE is a monthly newsletter of consumer interest. It is designed for those who report to the individual consumer rather than for mass distribution. For information about items in this issue, write: Lillie Vincent, Editor of SERVICE, Office of Communication, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250. Telephone (202) 447-5437.
